



British Regional Transport Association

(BRTA)

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Always welcome offers to help, assist, volunteer and be an area rep where you live to help recruit new members and support to BRTA and its causes. Please contact Richard Pill, BRTA CEO using contact details above.

<https://brtarail.com>

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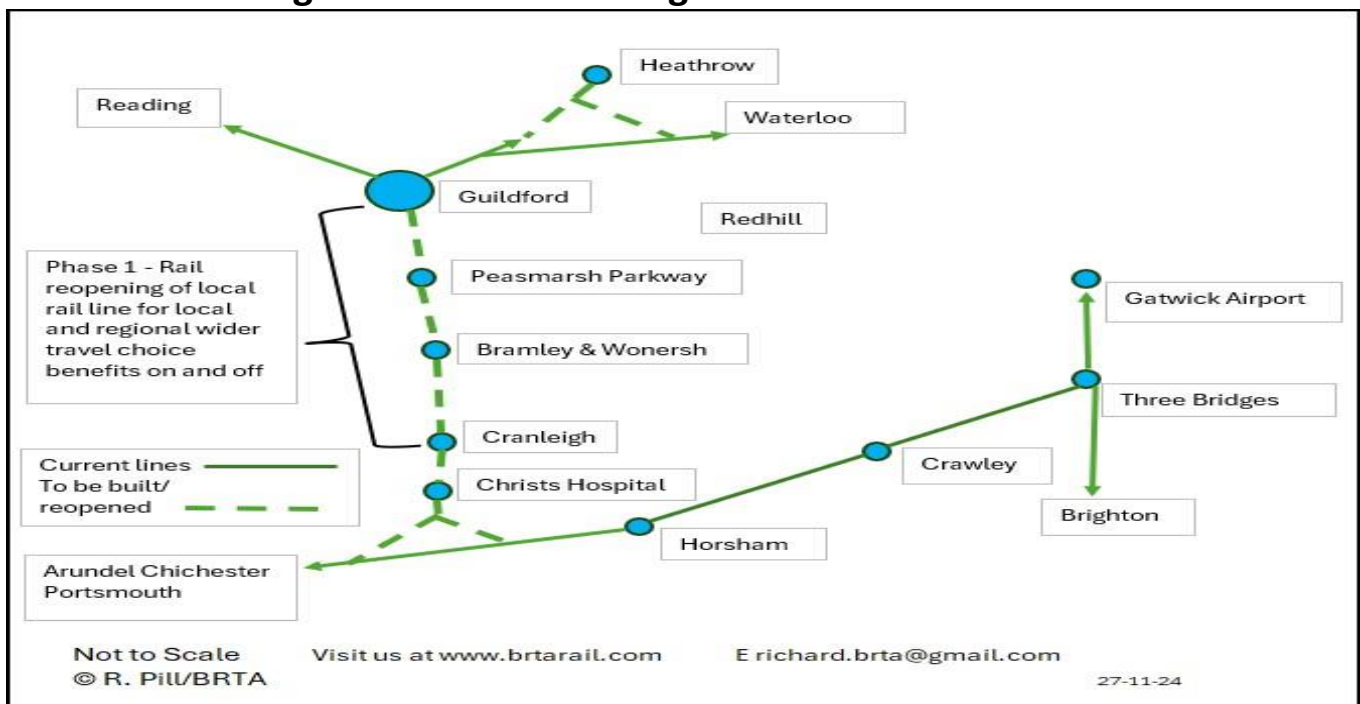
<https://brtarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/>

BRTA Newsletter No. 60

March-April 2025

Price where sold £1.50/Donations welcome

British Regional Transport Association (BRTA) has a bold strategy for the Guildford-Cranleigh-Horsham Local-Regional Rail Links!



We need local support expressed in membership and complicit volunteers to make progress from grassroots upwards and outwards to the strategic part the line would play in a nationwide rail network.

The British Regional Transport Association (BRTA) is a voluntary-based association and relies on a growing local-nationwide membership able to take local-regional responsibility to work together flexibly and compliantly with us to make progress with this much needed local rail link.

Nationwide and regionally, we should reasonably expect councils, regional bodies and central government to pick up on these opportunities and make progress and lead from the front. Instead, we are highlighting them in the hope that key bodies and individuals can see the opportunity on and off the rail and work with us to bring it about. Good ideas and observation is not enough, we need collaboration and a joint effort to build the necessary coalitions, gather support and share the load and responsibility. BRTA has the power to facilitate, but it is local people upwards who have the ability to determine and push through this wonderful opportunity which will not be forever unless actions are taken now.

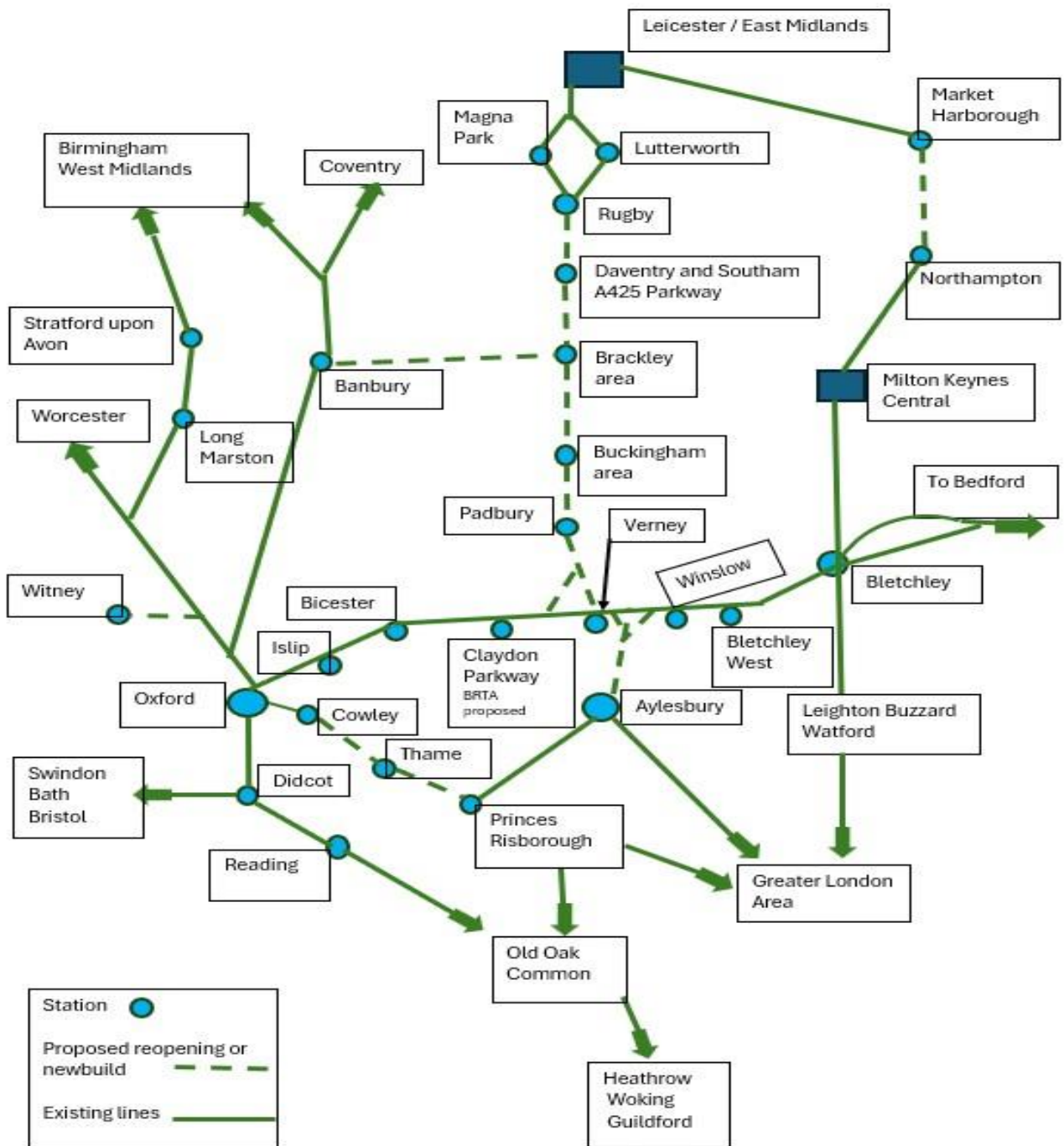
The following may be observed:

1. BRTA is focusing on Guildford-Cranleigh-Horsham with an Arundel Curve for South Coast access to and from. If our effort is superseded by a larger body or campaign, they may do phases or a wide gamut with a new direct bridge over the Horsham-Arundel line and a new-build to Shoreham serving growing towns and populations between the two via the old route in addition to a curve for direct running into Horsham and on to the Arundel direction.
2. Local commute and visitorship to and from Guildford, Cranleigh and Horsham as a local focus would be advantageous given our precious few resources.
3. Regionally Reading and beyond to Brighton and Portsmouth respectively and a shuttle linking Gatwick-Three Bridges-Horsham-Guildford-Heathrow from the south, gives more flexibility.
4. North Downs Line is not undermined, it is doing a roaring trade, but needs infill third rail electrification and Thameslinks from East Croydon to run semi-fast into Guildford and maybe extended to Reading as well. That in turn frees diesel units for strengthening and additional services elsewhere.
5. Our AGM in July 2025 will be held at Guildford and we aim to have 2 principal speakers and all will be welcome to it.
6. It is naïve to think 'instant' for such projects as this, they are incremental in a context of some hostility to notions of reopenings both within and outside the rail industry and government itself. For example, the Office for Road and Rail (ORR) have a policy against local level crossings for reopenings, demanding expensive bridges and duck-unders for new-build. That puts costs up and is disproportionate when evidence exists to indicate that as long as road side abuse and proper maintenance is done, level crossings 98% are a safe, cheap and useful alternative. Bridges get bashed and concrete can erode over time with concrete cancer. We need some balance and common sense here,

otherwise costs spiral deterring good ideas and modal shift back to rail on the back of modal choice from local projects such as this.

7. Please write/email to your MP's and ask them to support BRTA where you live and encourage government likewise to review ORR's policies and have a more case-by-case basis for assessing suitability of engineering local-regional conventional rail links and their designs. The nation stands to gain if we succeed!

<https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>



Not to Scale
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Visit us at www.brta.rail.com

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11-01-2025

Please note our website address is: <https://brtarail.com/> We have new thinking on old GC corridor re-railing, not literal every inch of old alignment but pragmatic new-build!

Great Central Railway - then, now and new-build hopes for a new railway along similar corridor.

South of Rugby

The GCR passed through Rugby from the South via the old Rugby Central station East of the junction of Hillmorton Road and Timber Court. While the station buildings, which were on the road that passed over the railway, have long since been demolished, the platforms are still largely intact. The closest parking to the old station belongs to the Rugby Railway club, which was originally established as a social space for workers on the railway line, and is now a private members club.

Crossing the West Coast Mainline (WCML)

The GCR did not connect with the existing Rugby Central Station and passed over the WCML, Oxford Canal, and river Avon via a viaduct, which ran from the bottom of Abbey Street, to the South, to what is now Staveley Way to the North. While the viaduct has been largely demolished, a section of it to the north still exists, ending in an elevated view of Rugby.

If the GCR route was to be re-railed, the viaduct would need to be rebuilt between Abbey Street and the remaining section near Staveley Way. The land under the old viaduct has largely been redeveloped as a light industrial estate (Butlers Leap).

GCR Today

The GCR route through Rugby is now a nature reserve known as the Great Central Walk. Rugby Borough Council looks after 95 acres of the reserve, which it acquired in 1970 for £5,500 (and another £5 in 1980).

The reserve runs from The M6 in the north, via Newton Picnic Site to the Oxford Canal to the East side of Brownsover near Staveley Way where it stops at the part demolished viaduct. The route starts again from the Abbey Street and South Street junction, and continues to Onley Lane to the South of Rugby. Ramped access onto the old track bed can now be found at the old railway bridges, including the remains of the old station on Hillmorton Road.

The 4.5-mile pathway is used for walking and cycling. The Warwickshire Wildlife Trust does a lot of work to maintain this wildlife habitat and note that many different species of rare and endangered wildlife can be seen on the walk.

North of Rugby:

Development of the Brownsover Estate in the north of Rugby has led to significant housing development adjoining the GCR route to the East side of Crowthorns road. The bridge over Newton Manor Lane has also been demolished.

Re-railing the old Midland Line from Rugby Central Station north out of Rugby is an alternative option as the midland line viaduct over the Avon, Oxford canal and Leicester Road (A426) is still in place but is currently a cycle path. The midland route heads out of Rugby main line station in a north- westerly direction and skirts around an industrial estate.

The main obstacle to the north of Rugby for both the GCR and Midland routes is the M6. Further north, the GCR line has been built over in part by the expansion of Lutterworth and by the M1. The Midland Line is still largely clear west of Rugby and continuing north towards Leicester.

By Eddie Blackburn 13-10-24

See also: <https://www.facebook.com/QuintonLeicesterviaRugby>

BRTA Response and Policy: identifying a new rail route (background):

We at BRTA are given to believe that as Quanton Road-Verney is being touted but with an easterly curve for Aylesbury - Milton Keynes integrated with emergent East-West Rail (Oxford-Milton Keynes/Bedford) and the old Claydon GC-Bletchley curve is being abandoned for HS2. A westerly curve also to serve Verney (with development) and onwards new-build to Buckingham and deviation south of Brackley/east of HS2/urban development to a new A43 area Parkway Station, could, with buses, serve Silverstone orbits and Brackley before going on towards the Woodford area, A425 Southam-Daventry trunk road/Parkway Station halfway between two expanding urban areas without a railway and onwards via Willoughby area, old GC into Rugby and onwards via new-build with maybe a loop line serving both Magna Park and Lutterworth

and entering Leicester via Narborough area or some other route, but old Midland is severely built on, akin to old Varsity Line east of Willington.

N2MH Update:



On Saturday 9th November 2024 the local MP Mr Mike Reader (Northampton South Constituency) attended the BRTA Northampton Forum Public Meeting at the Quaker Building in Northampton and gave the Northampton to Market Harborough (N2MH) rail link his support. He kindly offered to write/email a list BRTA Officers would prepare and contact to encourage support to a diverse range of principal potential and actual players. We are grateful for this kind offer. Likewise, we are encouraged that Harborough and Leicestershire County Councillors have been in touch expressing concerns that the project is not left out of local plans and all of us have a role and responsibility to ensure it is included as much as possible.

Getting both the public and elected politicians on board at whatever tier of government is essential for our requests for the study of 2020 to be finished, for the traffic figures of passenger and freight use to be revealed and the case updated and taken forward. Gone are misapprehensions of engineering and case merits, it would carry many, many people and goods and give relief to local-regional roads and reduce the chronic congestion and air pollution the 'heart of England' suffers from with sometimes tragic and appalling consequences. We must look to the greater good and by joining BRTA as a member, helps us be better resourced too.

See our excellent webpage: <https://brtarail.com/n2mh/>



Is Bedford Midland Railway Station loved?

BRTA is grateful for the offer of a regular stall at Bedford Midland Railway Station. It has been the 'new' station since about 1977 and one Network Rail person said had about 9000 people through it every day on average, pre-pandemic and now numbers are up again apparently. On the one hand East-West Rail, if 6-tracking goes ahead with the Northern Route, a major locational upheaval in the rectangle cordon between Bromham Road Bridge, Ashburnham Road and Ford End Road Bridge informing the cordon of which a lot of a car park and then there is the train shed where people get onto and off platforms, buy tickets and so on. In the future, all things being equal, we should expect usership through the station to expand considerably. The trainshed may need relocation/rebuilding. Car parking may need triple stacking and less land-take for returning rails anew. But from a practical point of view these things may be considered too:

1. A long walk between railway station and High Street plus only one an hour to and from the Bus Station is Greyfriars. This is detrimental to spreading footfall and spend to/from the railway station.
2. 20 odd miles to the North is our nearest railway station of Wellingborough over the border. Surely given growth in rural North Bedfordshire, a station, or stations north of Bedford would be prudent to a. reduce parking demand and b. cut congestion/queues? A study for Oakley and Sharnbrook area should be done.
3. More facilities at the station like a Greggs, nearest being All Hallows; Starbucks inadequate and the kiosk outside has a queue at odds with those coming up or down the stairs. Design better facilities now and retail potential. St Albans has a min- Sainsburys!
4. Passenger bus and toilet access front of station, another 'service' to improve on.

BRTA Vision for the West Midlands – Please give it pro-active support!

The **British Regional Transport Association (BRTA)**, a voluntary association seeking more, better, and affordable public transport. Local rail solutions and local reopenings and select pieces of new-build as well are main focuses. We have a nationwide vision and aspiration. We are always seeking champions, promoters, voluntary speakers at meetings and network accordingly for progressing things.

We support the following for the West Midlands:

1. **Orbital rail links with parkway stations for London, Birmingham, and Manchester** to enable more and better without clustering on core radial main lines.
2. **Stratford upon Avon - Long Marston** for second Oxford-Birmingham route and a south to west curve onto the Cotswold Line to bring Evesham and link arcingly to Worcester from eastern Birmingham in wrap around terms. Useful for freight by rail and growth and commuting patterning.
3. **Rugby-Leicester needs a new-build rail link** serving Lutterworth (growth area) and Magna Park, one of the biggest industrial parks in Europe without rail access. Potential is there, if not re-railed focuses into and out of Birmingham which congests roads and rails more. Capacity is needed, on the back of restoring some missing gaps in the network.
4. **A study for Bridgnorth to Shrewsbury 'new-build'** for western flank of Birmingham orbital rail using Severn Valley Railway. Surely an arrangement for paths could be done if a through route were feasibly to be recovered?
5. **Rebuild a new Stratford upon Avon-Cheltenham rail link.** Lickey Incline south of Birmingham is inadequate for long, heavy freight rains, but apart from more roads (bad), it is all there is currently. Stratford upon Avon-Cheltenham would give more capacity, gentler gradients and enable more by rail spread and scope. It needs studying, solutions of problems resolved and cross-border working. Too many places are taking insular and parochial outlooks, when we need more than ever a nationwide and regional vision starting at the grassroots upwards and outwards."

What you can do:

1. Join BRTA and give us your support
 2. Write to your local MP: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>
 3. Write/email the Elected Mayor for the West Midlands: <https://governance.wmca.org.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=2555>
- Ed. Not the last word, but can be expanded and refined on a 'what gives, what takes' basis.

East Anglia Rail Challenges, doing nothing is not an option!

The BRTA response to what needs doing in the East Anglia Region is as follows:

1. Kings Lynn Line redoubling to enable more trains. This should include exploration of portal freight and the reopening of a Kings Lynn-Hunstanton rail link with a southern 'triangle;' access for direct running to the resort as well as Stansted-Cambridge-Hunstanton for example. At the south of the railway near Ely, we want a south-west direct curve for Peterborough-Kings Lynn, saving changing at Ely and enabling a more diverse set of rail services to serve the Kings Lynn corridor. The Ely proposed rail-freight bypass off the Soham Line should not be allowed to block these ideas, but should have a double-track span over the Kings Lynn Line which takes them and expansion into consideration at the design stage, not a straightjacket.
2. The Ely-Bury St Edmunds Line needs re-doubling and a second platform put on the Soham Station, which BRTA with others called for many years and at £20 million could be doing more business. This especially if a south-to-west curve at the Newmarket end is installed, enabling a second Ely-Cambridge commuter feed railway off the Soham line.
3. Cambridge-Haverhill, is a must serving a new town, which as was proposed and expanded, promptly had its railway closed! Ideally the line would go onto link at Sudbury for Cambridge-Colchester and another route for freight from Felixstowe for example (capacity feed) as well as commuting to principal towns and rail heads (stations).
4. Stansted Airport is proposed for expansion, a pre-planning demand should be that it invests and works up an extension of the railway from Liverpool Street and Cambridge onwards to link with the Braintree Branch which should be doubled. That would link east and west Essex, enable Cambridge-Stansted-Colchester, enable a loop out of London Liverpool Street-Harlow-Stansted-Braintree-Chelmsford-Stratford and vice versa. In short it is a win, win if support and pre-planning designs can factor the idea in and BRTA sees how the rail alternative could cream traffic off the busy A120 trunk road and a new Parkway Station for the growing Great Dunmow area could also be very useful.
5. Quite simply, reopen the Maldon Branch for commuting and footfall and spend to this town and supports sustainable regeneration cannot happen until it is grasped and implemented, otherwise congestion and land use parking demand conflicts is the order of the day.
6. We would recommend that the former Cambridge-St Ives railway is kept under review with a view to re-railing it as far as one can go. Guided Busway was always a half-baked idea and whilst it as a concept has its fans, it is no substitute for a proper, integrated railway. Linking to Huntingdon would be nice. Cambridge North sits on former Chesterton Junction, but it is quite possible an arrangement akin to the Watford-St Albans line could be considered or at least studied as to connection options out of Cambridge. Let us remember, that if East-West Rail get their way, Cambridge will be linked to Oxford by rail direct as well as interim principal places like Bedford and Milton Keynes (Bletchley).

From the CEO: West Wales north-south main line restoration is a step in the right direction! re: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-68003542.amp>

This effort to rouse a modicum of common sense here must be given support by all to have any chance. Consider the following:

1. The principle, it would link by rail, into one of the most tourist attractive places to visit in Wales and of international renown Caernarfon for example and 3 University sites, of which Lampeter is under threat, access and brown field demand being two, which rail could serve if the old route and station site is returned to railway use.

2. North Wales terminal branch into Caernarfon and take on the constantly upgraded A487 trunk road and reduce more pressure on the A55. You get more roads and motorway designs if you do not restore or new-build a local rail alternative.

3. It would be new-build in some cases, so for example Aberystwyth, the old route went in from the north and reversed and had a circuitous route to the south, could a town bypass straight down be considered with an edge of town and Vale of Rheidol Railway with parking for multiple use access and help declutter Aberystwyth town centre?

4. Existing Cambrian lines have been subject to closures, pruning off feeder routes, be it Gobowen or Ruabon links, let alone Blaenau Ffestiniog to Bala! They have also been subject to decades of rationalisation, be it cutting out passing loops (capacity) and modernisation to automation brought savings, but little investment beyond newer trains but capacity on and off the rails is the key critical issue, as overcrowding and inability to see out of a window in a pleasant environment, means deterrent to potential would-be rail users, which in turn sends a negative downward spiral, when the line is brimming with beauty, potential and could be doing a lot more all-year-round trade in these days of 'get it right and demand and supply is the name of the game'.

5. Doing nothing is not an option. I do not agree with Beeching ideas or Richard Bowker who was just short of saying 'close it' for Denton on the Stockport to Stalybridge railway for having the less well-used station on the network. You get out what you put in. Run down, scant facilities, poor timetable on one hand, less well used brings a poor status on the other, when what analysis for identifying new markets, and improving trains, tracks, facilities, and personal sense of security which incrementally may court more usage to a flow? We have

seen stations where investment has informed more, closure, just puts rail out of the market and congestion stacks up with many negative consequences including poor public health?

6. Government has to decide which way to go, avoiding the fudge of 'all things to all people, but falling short of pleasing any but shareholders.' The Welsh Assembly needs a rota of places to meet like Cardiff, Machynlleth (Mid Wales) and North Wales (Llandudno) or 'profiteering going out of industries.' All tiers of governance and transport responsibility need to consult the public, come up with nurturing use and demand and service it. In Switzerland they have special wrap-around windows for some scenic railways and good seating for example, courting audiences to enjoy the railway travel experience. But small-loads of post, pallets, and parcels for example, could also have designed-in to normal stock - bring back the modern equivalent of the Guard's Van vestibule for example. But hauled specials, seasonal steam, good, regular normal timetables, can all add up to making the most of an environmentally friendly asset.

7. Coming to Carmarthen - Bangor, yes £2 billion is not to be sneezed at, but would play out in rising usage and modal sustainability for decades if done. Weird how a railway professional was coaxed to suggest upgrading the A487 rather than reopening the West Wales Main Line, even though the railway could inform all-year-round footfall, visitorship and demand including hotel for individuals and family trade, not just walkers, nature lovers and campaign-hostelry sort of swathes. Horses for courses, we need a diverse demand to inform a diverse accommodation and visitorship all-year-round to make thriving places, free of congestion and land-use parking demands and able to inform sustained employment for all ages and diversify market demands, skills and what is on offer. I am not talking fast-food per se, but horses for courses of what gives, what takes, what suites all pockets and what all can buy into?

It took 65 years to get to where we are (following 1960's closures and car generations) and we have not the luxury of another 60 years to reverse or new-build out of it, roads do not cut congestion! We need incrementalism upwards, not downward spirals of myopia and thinking one example, Cardiff Metro, beacons, and gas lights the rest of Wales by tokenism, rather we need even spreads based on getting places back on track. It is a challenge, but one which can raise the game for all, not just the few. See for the latest: <https://www.countytimes.co.uk/news/24950898.deal-struck-restore-services->

heart-wales-line/ New improved timetable and 'investment'. BRTA calls for a freight plan and as well as rebuilding of the north-south West Wales Main Line.

BRTA Membership Form 2025 Onwards – Join or Renew

Official annual renewal date may vary in any given year.



Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription.

Please help us recruit more members!

Tick if a New Member: _____

Tick if renewing as an existing member: _____

I/we would like more information about volunteering opportunities
with BRTA _____

Membership of BRTA is as follows:

Ordinary Member/Family £15 _____

Corporate Members (Business/Organisations) £50 _____

Concessionary Membership

(Any kind of Welfare/Disability) £10 _____ Students £5 _____

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ **Tel/Mobile:** _____

Email _____

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the
purposes of communication with BRTA and its purposes compliant
with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) _____

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

**Please send completed forms, payments, and donations to BRTA
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